Al Stewart at the Fairfield Halls

infotextmanuscripts.org/djetc/dj-al-fairfield.html

It’s nice to see this all-American Scots lad has not lost his English accent. Well, lad is a bit strong, but he certainly looks younger than his 68 years, and his songs are just as timeless as when first I heard him, before most of you were born.

Al aside, I was not quite the oldest person in the auditorium; this was largely dedicated fans who have followed him for years, including some who appear to have brought their kids. Some too had been at the Royal Albert Hall last week for the performance of the entire *Year Of The Cat* album. I gave that a miss expecting it to find its way onto YouTube at some point, but was told before the show by one of the crew that the venue had demanded a payment of £20,000 for that privilege. Thus, the world is denied. Having said that, there are some “bootleg” recordings on YouTube already, including *Carol* from *Modern Times*. The quality ain’t so good, but...
The Croydon show began with Nachmanoff playing four numbers including a song I hadn’t heard, *Fragile Thing*, and one I had, *The Loyalist*. In the interval he told me *Fragile Thing* was about no one in particular. I begged to differ:

“She’s a fragile thing, a complicated angel
With a heart of glass, a checkered past
You must be careful

She’s a fragile thing, but this fragile thing
Will break your heart...”

That particular Angel lost her halo years ago, but I’ve said too much already.

The electric version of *The Loyalist* sounds much better than the version he performed here, but don’t take my word for it, buy the album.

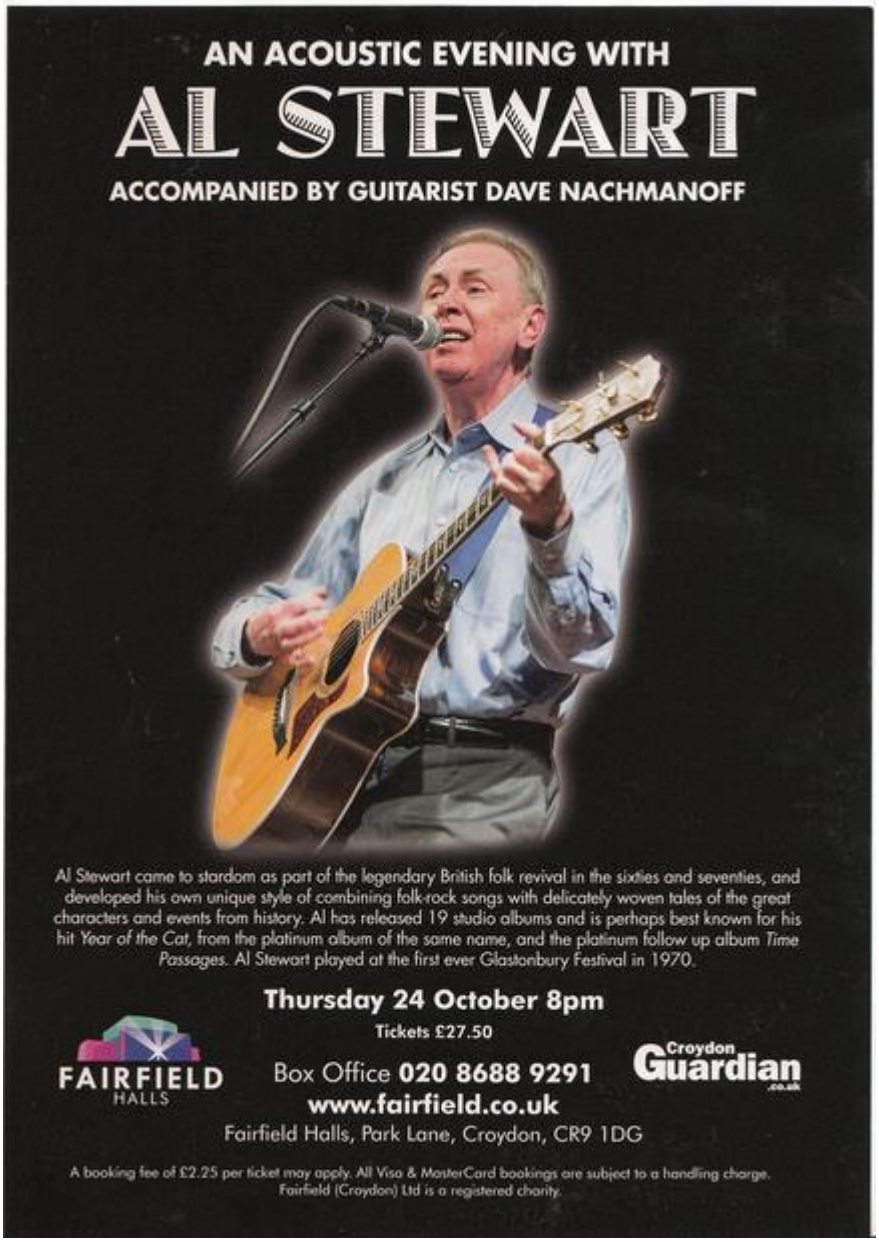
Al opened his set with *House Of Clocks* from his 2000 concept album about wine.

Other numbers included *Sirens Of Titan* from 1975, and *Palace Of Versailles*.

The album version of this classic historical folk-rock track is heavily keyboard-oriented, but somehow Nachmanoff managed to get a keyboard sound here.

Although the American does the bulk of the fancy stuff, Stewart is himself no mean guitarist; having seen him perform *Nostradamus* live in which he made one guitar sound like three, I know what I’m talking about. Alas, there was nothing of that length here, but for a man who has written perhaps 500 songs and released over a dozen studio albums in a career dating back to the 60s, selectivity is essential. He did of course perform *Year Of The Cat*, and *Gina In The Kings Road*, a song that while harking back to the Swinging Sixties dates only to 2005.

Although the trio performed only one encore with two songs, this was a full evening’s entertainment. It’s difficult to credit I first saw him over 30 years ago. To that there is only one response: *Time Passages*.


AN ACOUSTIC EVENING WITH
AL STEWART
ACCOMPANIED BY GUITARIST DAVE NACHMANOFF
Al Stewart came to stardom as part of the legendary British folk revival in the sixties and seventies, and developed his own unique style of combining folk-rock songs with delicately woven tales of the great characters and events from history. Al has released 19 studio albums and is perhaps best known for his hit Year of the Cat, from the platinum album of the same name, and the platinum follow up album Time Passages. Al Stewart played at the first ever Glastonbury Festival in 1970.
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Then there is the future; there has been no new studio material from Al Stewart since 2008, but it was clear from his banter – a regular feature of his shows – that he has been writing, at least here and there, so don't be surprised if a new one does emerge at some point. He has also written the foreword to *Bournemouth A Go! Go!* For those not in the know, the relevance of this can be found in his epic song *Love Chronicles*, which at over 18 minutes was way too long to play last night.

Join the Dave Nachmanoff mailing list and get a free plectrum. Er, right.

[The above review was first published October 25, 2013.]